



June 14, 2019

TO: Interested Parties

FR: Mark Ayoub, Change Research

RE: Strong bipartisan opposition to Student Success Act

Change Research conducted a poll of 1,548 likely 2020 voters in West Virginia from June 11-12 and found strong bipartisan opposition to the omnibus Student Success Act currently being debated in the State Legislature.

Almost three-fourths of West Virginians (71%) say that they have heard about the bill, and of this 71%, 62% oppose the bill, compared to just 29% who support it. This holds true among Republicans, among whom 47% oppose it compared to just 41% who support it. More specifically, West Virginians do not like that legislators are being forced to take one vote on a variety of different changes that they may not all support.

When asked to choose which statement about the Student Success Act they agreed with more, 78% chose *"Each of these changes should be voted on separately so that legislators can vote yes on the ones they support and no on the ones they don't"* compared to just 22% who chose *"West Virginia's education system is in desperate need of reform, which is why the Legislature should just take one vote on this comprehensive bill rather than take forever to debate 20 different bills."* Once again, this approach has bipartisan support, with 86% of Democrats supporting this approach, 77% of Independents, and 72% of Republicans.

In particular, West Virginians overwhelmingly favor (64% strongly support, 80% total support) the part of the Student Success Act that gives teachers and service personnel a raise of 5%, but a majority (56%) oppose legalizing charter schools in West Virginia, and almost half (47% oppose, 33% support) oppose creating publicly funded education savings accounts that would allow parents to send their children to private schools or homeschool them.

Furthermore, West Virginians are sick and tired of their taxpayer dollars funding these legislative shenanigans - 48% say the Governor and Speaker should cancel the special session and take this up in the next regular session, vs. 32% who say they should continue to meet in special session regardless of the cost to the taxpayers.

Another finding that is clear from this polling is that West Virginians want the Legislature to seek input from West Virginians when drafting education bills, not shady out-of-state groups. 85% say that the Legislature should seek input from parents when drafting education bills,

80% say they should seek input from teachers, and 62% say they should seek input from local school districts. Just 11% however say that they should seek input from think tanks, and only 19% say they should seek input from charter school organizations.

Further bolstering this sentiment against out-of-state interests is that 48% of West Virginians view the Koch Brothers unfavorably, compared to just 3% who view them favorably. As a result, it's not surprising that they don't want the Koch-backed Americans for Prosperity writing West Virginia education policy.

Senate President Mitch Carmichael's stubborn push for this bill has hurt him in the eyes of West Virginians, as 52% view Carmichael unfavorably compared to just 11% who view him favorably. Speaker Hanshaw (5% favorable, 19% unfavorable) and Governor Justice (23% favorable, 57% unfavorable) don't have quite the same ratio of unfavorable to favorable, but would be wise to reject this bill before further hurting their popularity.

The unpopularity of key Republican West Virginia politicians holds even among Republican voters: 45% view Governor Justice unfavorably compared to 29% favorably, and 39% view President Carmichael unfavorably compared to 16% favorably. Speaker Hanshaw is roughly even right now among Republicans (8% favorable, 9% unfavorable), but would no doubt see these numbers worsen if he were to push this unpopular bill through. Furthermore, the Republican voters opposing this bill and the Republican politicians pushing it are not centrist or moderate Republicans - rather, 94% of them view President Trump favorably (as does 63% of the overall sample).

Change Research surveyed 1,548 likely 2020 voters in West Virginia from June 11-12. The survey was conducted online, using Change Research's Bias Correct Engine. Post-stratification was done on age, gender, education, ethnicity, region, and 2016 presidential vote. The margin of error is approximately +/- 2.5%. Incomplete responses, respondents outside of West Virginia, and unregistered voters were filtered out.

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